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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: LAVROV'S UPBEAT ASSESSMENT OF RUSSIAN DIPLOMACY

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns for
reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Lavrov's annual public review of the impact of Russia's foreign policy reprised familiar themes, but was surprisingly less confrontational in tone. In his January 22 article, Lavrov characterized Putin's February 2007 Munich speech as a pivotal moment in international affairs, claiming that the speech prompted the West to "reevaluate" the realities of the modern world system and to take into account Russian interests and ideas. Together with his January 23 press conference, Lavrov stressed that, despite Russia's "redlines" on Kosovo and missile defense, Russia remained open to deeper cooperation with the U.S. and Europe, citing the P5 1 and Quartet as examples of effective collective leadership. Lavrov recognized the West's "legitimate interests" in Russia's neighborhood, but warned that the use of double standards in evaluating a country's democratic record, active promotion of NATO enlargement, and likely recognition ofwqQls:-----

¶2. (C) As far as Foreign Minister Lavrov is concerned, the year 2007 unambiguously demonstrated Russia's resurgence as an influential and responsible actor on the world stage. Lavrov repeatedly stressed in his January 22 article in Russia's Diplomatic Journal that Putin's February 2007 speech in Munich was a defining moment in international relations. Lavrov argued that Putin's clear articulation of Russian foreign policy concerns and aspirations led to a "reevaluation of values and the realities of the modern world" by Russia's partners in the West. As a result of this reevaluation, Lavrov claimed that the Western world has begun to take into account Russia's interests and proposals.

¶3. (C) Lavrov's tone in his article and January 23 press conference was that of a confident and forgiving sage. Rather than dwelling on the differences between Russia and the West, Lavrov stressed that Munich was essentially a wake-up call. Russia only wanted to drive home to its partners that the world has changed: unipolarity and rigid, ideology-based alliances no longer apply to today's multipolar world. In effect, he claimed, world peace and stability hinge on the U.S. and Europe adapting to the new times.

Collective Leadership

¶4. (C) As in previous articles and speeches, Lavrov said Russia strongly advocated a world order based on pragmatism, international law, non-confrontation, and collective action. Dismissing attempts by some countries to "contain Russia" as anachronistic and futile, Lavrov argued that Russia's European identity, its willingness to engage in open and honest dialogue with the West, and its "pluralistic political culture" removed the basis for confrontation with the West.

Lavrov said that the world is in desperate need of "flexible" collective leadership, or a "concert of powers of the 21st century."

¶15. (C) Lavrov insisted that Russia would agree only to cooperation based on a "joint analysis" and "joint approach" to global problems. He referred to the recent P5 1 negotiations over a third UNSC resolution on Iran and the involvement of the Quartet in the Annapolis Conference as two clear examples of genuine collaboration.

¶16. (C) However, Lavrov went to great lengths in his article and press conference to demonstrate that collective leadership is not a "coalition of the willing," where countries are supporting a policy initiative already adopted by one country, nor is it "collective unilateralism," where one member can appeal to "solidarity" to address its own problems with another country. Lavrov cited the 2003 invasion of Iraq as an example of the former and the UK's row with Russia over the closing of the British Council offices in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg as an example of the latter.

¶17. (C) Although Lavrov did not use this term in the press conference, he did reiterate Russia's "redlines" on U.S. missile defense plans and the West's recognition of a Kosovo's unilateral independence. Warning that Russia "cannot be bargained with," Lavrov said the unilateral approach of the U.S. and Europe to these two issues remained a serious concern to Russia.

Russia's Neighborhood

¶18. (C) Lavrov also devoted considerable attention to Russia's relations with the CIS countries. In response to provocative questions from Russian journalists, Lavrov refused to characterize the CIS countries as part of Russia's "sphere of influence" or the West's increased involvement in Russia's neighborhood as inherently anti-Russian. Lavrov dismissed spheres of influence as a "Cold War term" and he recognized that the U.S. and Europe had "legitimate interests" in Russia's neighborhood -- namely, energy resources and the fight against terrorism and organized crime. Lavrov stressed that Russia is not afraid of competition with the West in the region, and even pointed to Russia's readiness to cooperate on issues of common concern (e.g., terrorism and organized crime).

¶19. (C) However, Lavrov cautioned the West against fostering further "destabilization" in the region. He highlighted three examples. First, the U.S. and EU used double standards in evaluating the democratic credentials of governments, which has fostered an "us versus them" atmosphere in the region. Second, the West's active promotion of the eastward expansion of NATO only creates new tensions and lines of division in the neighborhood and Russia must view further enlargement as a potential military threat (notwithstanding assurances from the West). Finally, a Kosovo coordinated declaration of independence (CDI) would serve as a precedent for unresolved conflicts around the world, including in Russia's neighborhood. Lavrov clarified that Russia was "not chomping at the bit" to recognize Abkhazia or South Ossetia and that Russia fully understood the destabilizing effects of separatism, but stressed that CDI would leave Russia in a very difficult position.

¶10. (C) In response to pointed questions on the state of Russia's bilateral relations with Ukraine and Georgia, Lavrov refrained from using tough rhetoric, and stressed that, "unlike some countries," Russia did not interfere in the political processes in these two countries. Lavrov said Russia respected the sovereignty and national interests of each country, but urged Ukraine to consider the full impact of NATO accession on Russia and other neighbors and cautioned Georgia against further "provocative acts" that prevent the improvement of bilateral ties.

Comment

¶11. (C) Lavrov's assessment of the impact of Russian foreign policy in 2007 was surprisingly light on criticism of the U.S. and Europe and heavy on Russia's efforts to usher in a new world order. While not hesitating to highlight the "error of our ways" on such issues as Kosovo, missile defense, and NATO expansion, Lavrov tried to make the public case that only through genuine cooperation with Russia and other emerging power centers would the international community be able to make progress on key global challenges.

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